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ABSTRACT

A major purpose of this needs assessment study was identification of areas of consensus of respondent groups concerning their attitudes toward educational issues. These issues may be of importance in setting policy, making decisions, or developing new programs in the future. The four respondent groups were administrators, teachers, parents, and students. A number of similarities existed among respondent groups' opinions. These include effects of student absenteeism on school achievement, support for a back-to-basics movement and strict disciplinary policy. The differences between groups' opinions included views on effects of voluntary integration on the quality of education, disposition of vacant school buildings, and responsibility for student behavior. The system-wide responses to the school community survey were presented on charts indicating percentage of responses. The report is intended for audiences including: Board of Education, superintendent, administrators, teachers, and the community. (DWH)

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EVALUATION REPORT

ED209334

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DEPARTMENT OF EVALUATION SERVICES

- PROVIDING ASSESSMENT, PROGRAM EVALUATION AND RESEARCH SERVICES -

Saginaw Public Schools

Saginaw, Michigan

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DISTRICT-WIDE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

SUMMARY OF SYSTEM TOTALS PART II

1980-81

An Approved Report of the

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL

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June, 1981

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INTRODUCTION

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Saginaw Schools according to administrators, teachers, high school students, and parents? In what areas are schools performing as well as desired and where do inadequacies exist? What areas of operation warrant immediate attention to remedy weaknesses? What are perceptions about current educational issues? The answers to these questions are important to education, therefore, an effort was made during April and May, 1981, to gather information about them through a needs assessment survey.

The results of this survey is being reported in two different formats. The first type of report (Part 1) dealt specifically with determining an actual level of need based on the difference between what respondents feel "is," and "what should be." This report, the second in the series (Part 2); deals with the attitude of responding groups towards current educational issues. A Part 1 and Part 2 report will be provided at the district-wide, instructional and cluster levels.

Who Was Included in Saginaw's School-Community Study?

Information was gathered from administrators, teachers, parents, and senior high students. During April and May, 1981, the polled individuals completed questionnaires, to provide the necessary survey data. There were over 2,100 respondents to the instruments (see Appendix A for the exact count of usable returns by respondent group).

This report presents the findings from administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

How will the Findings of the Study be Reported?

A series of reports will result from this study:

I. District-Wide Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study: (This report) presenting the system total and totals by groups of elementary, secondary, special education, and adult and continuing education teachers; administrators; parents; and students. Intended audiences include: Board of Education, superintendent, administrators, teachers, and community.

II. Instructional Level Reports: presenting summary information for elementary, junior high, senior high, special education, and adult and continuing education levels. Intended audiences include: Board of Education, superintendent, assistant superintendents, and central office administrative staff.

III. Cluster Level Reports: presenting summary information for each elementary, junior high, and senior high school cluster. Intended audiences include: assistant superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and students.

The intent of providing the results in this type of format is to provide for decision-makers the kinds of information that will be useful in reaching decisions within their realm of responsibility. A companion "Part 1" type of report for each level will also be made available.

How were the Data Collected?

The data for students and parents were gathered from samples drawn from the various populations while all teachers and administrators were polled. Parents were surveyed by means of a mailed questionnaire, while questionnaires for all other respondents were hand-delivered. Many of the questions were adapted from the Gallup Poll of the public's attitude toward the schools. The "Part 2" portion of this questionnaire contained a total of 24 multiple choice questions concerning attitudes toward current educational issues. Parents and administrators were asked to respond to all 24 questions, teachers to 17 questions, and students to 15 questions.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

One of the major purposes of this needs assessment study was to identify areas in which consensus existed for the respondent groups concerning their attitudes toward educational issues. These educational issues may be of importance in setting policy, making decisions, or developing new programs in the future. The responses presented should help decision makers to better understand each group.

The overall findings of all respondents and each respondent group separately will be presented in the section which follows. The percent choosing each multiple choice option is presented for all groups and the total. The number of respondents by group (to each question) is also provided.

A number of similarities and differences between groups are highlighted in a short summary section. The reader is encouraged to study the results in detail because any summary must by its very nature ignore some of the finer points.

SYSTEM-WIDE RESPONSES TO THE PART II PORTION OF THE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SURVEY--SPRING, 1981.

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							System Total
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
Should high school courses be arranged so that students can finish one year of college work while they are still in high school and can graduate from college in three years instead of four?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	41%	51%	58%	53%
2. No					50%	40%	24%	35%
3. Don't know					9%	9%	18%	12%
Number of Respondents					82	848	560	1,490
How important are extracurricular activities to a young person's education--extremely important, fairly important, not too important?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Extremely important	33%	35%	37%	46%	39%	33%	38%	35%
2. Fairly important	53%	48%	58%	46%	54%	47%	39%	47%
3. Not too important	12%	17%	4%	8%	7%	15%	12%	13%
4. Don't know	2%	0	1%	0	0	5%	12%	5%
Number of Respondents	314	191	71	24	82	848	559	2,089
Should job placement service be operated by our schools?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	74%	67%	75%	70%
2. No					20%	24%	13%	20%
3. Don't know					6%	10%	11%	10%
Number of Respondents					82	846	580	1,508

N.A.-Not applicable

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							System Total
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
Would you favor changing from the present elementary (K-6), junior high (7-9), and high school (10-12) grade arrangement to a middle school concept where grades 6-8 would be taught in the same building?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	55%	55%	63%	58%	66%	36%	36%	43%
2. No	31%	28%	19%	33%	24%	50%	48%	42%
3. Don't know	14%	17%	19%	8%	10%	14%	16%	15%
Number of Respondents	302	190	70	24	82	847	577	2,092
In your opinion, do you believe that student absenteeism is in part responsible for lower student achievement?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	95%	76%	62%	71%
2. No					5%	17%	21%	18%
3. Don't know					0	7%	18%	11%
Number of Respondents					82	847	577	1,506
What would you do with a vacant school which has been closed due to a drop in enrollment? Would you use it for:								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Community activities	15%	15%	N.A.	14%	11%	11%	N.A.	12%
2. Vocational and job training	18%	14%		27%	7%	38%		28%
3. Cultural centers	5%	2%		5%	8%	3%		4%
4. Senior citizen center	5%	6%		5%	1%	5%		5%
5. Sell, rent, or lease	56%	64%		50%	66%	36%		47%
6. Don't know	0	0		0	7%	7%		4%
Number of Respondents	285	176		22	68	691		1,247

N.A.-Not applicable

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							System Total
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
Do you think large classes make a great deal of difference, little difference, or no difference at all in a student's achievement?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Great deal of difference	91%	88%	83%	92%	50%	81%	54%	75%
2. Little difference	7%	12%	13%	8%	47%	14%	25%	17%
3. No difference at all	1%	1%	0	0	0	3%	13%	5%
4. Don't know	1%	0	4%	0	3%	2%	8%	3%
Number of Respondents	314	191	71	24	78	846	578	2,102
Do you think the Saginaw News gives a fair and accurate picture of the public schools in this community?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	18%	23%	24%	33%	15%	33%	28%	27%
2. No	71%	68%	61%	58%	80%	45%	52%	55%
3. Don't know	11%	9%	14%	8%	5%	22%	20%	18%
Number of Respondents	298	190	70	24	80	843	577	2,082
If high school students can meet academic requirements in three years instead of four, should they be permitted to graduate early?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	66%	66%	70%	67%
2. No					32%	27%	20%	25%
3. Don't know					2%	7%	10%	8%
Number of Respondents					82	848	576	1,506

N.A.-Not applicable

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							System Total
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
How much confidence do you have in the school board's ability to deal with school problems--a great deal of confidence, a fair amount, very little, or none?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. A great deal of difference	4%	7%	8%	8%	38%	13%	N.A.	12%
2. A fair amount	63%	53%	61%	79%	55%	56%		58%
3. Very little	29%	37%	27%	13%	8%	22%		24%
4. None	3%	3%	4%	0	0	4%		3%
5. Don't know	0	0	0	0	0	5%		3%
Number of Respondents	303	189	71	24	80	849		1,516
Would you favor or oppose a system that would hold teachers and administrators more accountable for the progress of students?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Favor	35%	48%	40%	58%	73%	75%	46%	57%
2. Oppose	42%	40%	46%	25%	16%	12%	26%	24%
3. Don't know	23%	12%	14%	17%	11%	13%	28%	19%
Number of Respondents	303	189	70	24	82	846	579	2,093
A suggestion has been made that parents of school children attend one evening meeting a month at school to find out what they can do at home to improve their children's behavior and school work. Do you agree?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Agree	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	79%	81%	N.A.	81%
2. Disagree					13%	11%		11%
3. Don't know					7%	8%		8%
Number of Respondents					82	849		931

N.A.-Not applicable

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							System Total
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
Do you favor a back-to-basics movement (an emphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic)?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Favor	86%	84%	79%	92%	83%	92%	N.A.	88%
2. Oppose	7%	9%	7%	4%	14%	4%		6%
3. Don't know	7%	6%	14%	4%	4%	5%		6%
Number of Respondents	312	190	71	24	81	845		1,523
Would you send your children to a special public school that has strict discipline and puts emphasis on the three R's?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	85%	86%	85%	75%	70%	71%	N.A.	77%
2. No	10%	8%	8%	4%	19%	14%		12%
3. Don't know	5%	6%	7%	21%	11%	15%		11%
Number of Respondents	312	191	71	24	80	838		1,516
Have teacher unions helped, hurt or made no difference in the quality of public school education in the United States?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Helped	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	13%	18%	N.A.	18%
2. Hurt					65%	33%		36%
3. Made no difference					12%	26%		24%
4. Don't know					10%	23%		22%
Number of Respondents					78	829		907
Should students who are frequently absent without good reason be dismissed from school?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	34%	73%	39%	54%	39%	52%	53%	51%
2. No	46%	20%	43%	38%	54%	33%	37%	36%
3. Don't know	20%	7%	17%	8%	6%	14%	10%	13%
Number of Respondents	311	192	69	24	79	837	581	2,093

N.A.-Not applicable

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							System Total
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money to cover cost of inflation. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	61%	67%	60%	54%	90%	37%	N.A.	50%
2. No	22%	23%	24%	38%	6%	45%		34%
3. Don't know	18%	10%	16%	8%	4%	19%		16%
Number of Respondents	309	191	70	24	81	841		1,516
Would you favor an increase in state taxes so that real estate taxes could be lowered on local property for school expenditures?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	58%	70%	72%	71%	65%	47%	N.A.	55%
2. No	19%	22%	14%	8%	23%	26%		23%
3. Don't know	23%	8%	14%	21%	11%	26%		22%
Number of Respondents	311	189	71	24	81	835		1,511
Which of the following items would you cut first to reduce school expenditures?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Reduce teachers by increasing class size	2%	5%	5%	0	3%	5%	21%	10%
2. Close buildings and increase class size	19%	37%	24%	16%	66%	8%	15%	19%
3. Cut out kindergarten	11%	12%	3%	16%	1%	8%	15%	11%
4. Reduce janitorial services	22%	15%	25%	21%	8%	14%	21%	18%
5. Reduce classroom supplies	46%	30%	42%	47%	10%	23%	28%	30%
6. Don't know	0	0	0	0	11%	42%	0	12%
Number of Respondents	244	142	59	19	63	399	547	1,473

N.A.-Not applicable

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	System Total
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
Student behavior problems such as striking a teacher may occur from time to time in our schools, in your opinion, who should deal with this kind of problem--should it be the parents, the school, or the courts?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. The parents	15%	3%	20%	25%	13%	39%	32%	28%
2. The schools	45%	46%	42%	35%	50%	32%	29%	35%
3. The courts	29%	46%	31%	35%	32%	22%	28%	28%
4. Don't know	12%	5%	7%	5%	5%	6%	11%	9%
Number of Respondents	255	154	55	20	60	624	537	1,704
Should parents be required to meet regularly with school personnel before each year to examine the grades, test scores, and career goals for each of their children?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	75%	79%	N.A.	79%
2. No					15%	13%		13%
3. Don't know					10%	8%		8%
Number of Respondents					79	837		916
Would you favor voluntary integration in the district?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Favor	77%	76%	81%	71%	86%	60%	39%	60%
2. Oppose	11%	15%	6%	25%	9%	22%	27%	20%
3. Don't know	12%	9%	13%	4%	5%	19%	34%	20%
Number of Respondents	307	190	68	24	79	835	579	2,082

N.A.-Not applicable

Question	RESPONDENT GROUPS							System Total
	Teachers				Administrator	Parent	Student	
	Elementary	Secondary	Special Educ	Adult & Cont Educ				
Do you feel voluntary integration would improve the quality of education for students?								
Ratings/Choices								
1. Yes	34%	30%	45%	38%	37%	30%	37%	33%
2. No	46%	53%	30%	54%	43%	51%	33%	45%
3. Don't know	20%	17%	25%	8%	20%	19%	30%	22%
Number of Responderts	307	188	69	24	81	839	581	2,088

N.A.-No. applicable

SUMMARY

A number of similarities and differences observed between respondent groups are highlighted below in list form. The decision rule for determining a similarity is agreement either in a positive or negative direction. Agreement is reached when 51% or more of all groups (disregarding the "don't know" responses) had responses in one direction. A difference occurs when one or more groups are no longer in agreement. Comments are offered when appropriate to amplify the meaning of the response patterns noted.

Similarities

- All groups believed that student absenteeism, in part, is responsible for lowered student achevement (range 95% to 62%).
- All groups favored a back-to-basics movement (range 79% to 92%).
- All groups were inclined toward sending their children to a special public school that has strict discipline and puts emphasis on the three R's (range 70% to 86%).
- All groups felt the Saginaw News does not give a fair and accurate picture of the Saginaw Public Schools (range 45% to 80%).
- All groups gave a "fair" confidence rating (scale--great deal, fair amount, very little, or none) to the school board's ability to deal with school problems (range 55% to 79%).
- All groups surveyed (administrator, parent, and student) felt that job placement services should be operated by the schools (range 67% to 75%).
- All groups polled (administrator, parent, and student) believe senior high students should be permitted to graduate in three years instead of four if they can meet the academic requirements (range 66% to 70%).

- All groups polled (administrator and parent) favored both the requirement that parents meet prior to the start of school with school personnel for the review of their children's progress and the suggestion that parents attend one evening meeting monthly to learn about ways to improve their children's behavior and school work (range 75% to 79% and 79% to 81% respectively).

- The majority of all respondents either felt that extra-curricular activities are extremely important or fairly important to a young person's education (scale--extremely important, fairly important, not too important).

- All groups favored voluntary integration of the school district (range 39% to 86%). Students evidenced the largest undecided group (34%).

Differences

- Students and special education teachers felt voluntary integration would improve the quality of education, while all other groups were of the opinion that voluntary integration would not improve educational achievement. Students were fairly equally split (37% improve and 33% no improvement and 30% don't know). This may mean that people see integration as a social goal rather than one to improve academic achievement.

- Parents and teachers agreed that high school students should be allowed to finish college work while still in high school (51% and 58% respectively), while administrators disagreed (50%).

- All teacher groups and administrators agreed that the middle school concept, where grades 6-8 would be taught in the same building, should be installed in our schools (range 55% to 68%); while parents and students disagreed (50% and 48% respectively).

- Parents felt vacant schools should be either disposed of or used as vocational training sites (38% and 36% respectively), while professional educators felt disposal of the buildings was the best alternative (range 50% to 60%).

- Administrators were split on whether large class sizes negatively affect student achievement, while all other groups felt large classes do negatively affect achievement (range 54% to 92%).

- Elementary and secondary teachers opposed holding teachers and administrators more accountable for student progress (42% and 46% respectively), while all other groups favored such accountability (range 48% to 75%).

- Administrators agreed that labor unions have hurt public schools (65%), while parents were split in their responses (18% helped, 33% hurt, 26% made no difference, and 23% don't know).

- It seems that the policy to dismiss frequently absent students applies to secondary level students for most respondents. Secondary and adult and continuing education teachers, parents, and students felt that frequently absent students should be dismissed from school (range 52% to 73%); while elementary and special education teachers and administrators felt these students should not be dismissed (range 43% to 54%).

- Parents were split on their agreement with a tax increase to cover the cost of inflation (37% yes and 45% no), while all other groups favored such an increase (range 54% to 90%).

- Administrators and secondary teachers thought closing buildings was the first priority to reduce school expenditures (66% and 37% respectively), while all other groups rated cutting classroom supplies as their first order of priority (range 23% to 47%).

- The question of whether the parents, the schools, or the courts should handle student behavior problems such as striking a teacher obtained a range of diverse responses. Elementary and special education teachers plus administrators felt it was the schools' job (range 42% to 50%). Secondary and continuing education teachers were equally split between the schools and the courts (46% and 35% respectively). Parents were in favor of either the home taking care of the problem (39%) or the schools (32%). Students seemed the most diverse with 32% for the parents, 28% for the schools, and 28% for the courts.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

SURVEY GROUPS AND RETURN RATES FOR THE 1981
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Groups Surveyed	Count and Description of Individuals in Sample or Population	Returns #	Returns %
Parents	A sample of 4,392 parents who were registered and voted in November, 1979 and/or October, 1980 millage elections. (Follow-up mailed to low return rate areas.)	867	20
Elementary Teachers	All 476 teachers paid February 26, 1981.	326	68
Secondary Teachers	All 406 teachers paid February 26, 1981.	203	50
Special Education Teachers	All 111 teachers at Millet Center, Handley Elementary (support staff), and Holland Education paid February 26, 1981.	75	68
Adult & Continuing Education Teachers	All 71 teachers paid February 26, 1981.	29	41
Administrators	All 122 administrators or technicians paid February 26, 1981.	84	69
Students	A sample of approximately 495 students from grades 10, 11, and 12 of both high schools.	603	82